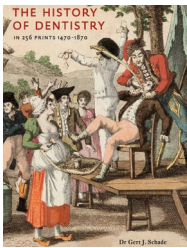


BOOK REVIEW



THE HISTORY OF DENTISTRY (IN 256 PRINTS 1470–1870)

Gert J. Schade;
2020; £45.00; pp. 320;
ISBN: 978-90-903302-0-4

When visiting a museum or art gallery with a collection of old masters, many will recognise the temptation to search for pictures or drawings of our ancient predecessors, such as barber-surgeons drawing attention at a fair while publicly pulling someone's teeth.

Recently, an international edition appeared of a sizeable book, in which four centuries of history of dentistry are portrayed in prints and sketches from 1470 up to 1870. This period roughly spans from the invention of book printing to the start of the Industrial Revolution.

The history of dentistry offers a chronological walk through a 'museum as a book', in 100 small chapters. The book/museum is well structured, in four sections (or if you wish, rooms): Apollonia: from martyrdom to veneration; Market scenes: from quacks to fairs; Interior scenes: moving indoors; and Cartoons: from amusing to grotesque.

The journey through the illustrated history of dentistry embarks with a description of the 1493 German 'Nuremberg Chronicles'

in which already Saint Apollonia made her appearance (she was tortured by having her teeth violently pulled out, and became patroness for those suffering from dental pains). Some chapters further we see people in the markets being offered methods to combat the dreaded 'tooth worm', or we may study the famous 1523 Lucas van Leyden engraving of a tooth-drawer treating a patient (while the female assistant collects some coins unnoticed from the patient's money-bag). In another section/room, we may be surprised by an 1830 litho (after William Hogarth) full of symbols, humour and criticism of English society.

Composing such a systematic overview, including well-founded information from both dental and art perspective, is no sinecure. It has taken the author, a retired OMF surgeon and former Chair of the Dutch Friends of Dental Heritage Foundation, years to arrive at this result. And that shows.

The history of dentistry offers, besides beautiful illustrations, detailed – but not too lengthy – valid background information. It is a 'must have' for anyone interested in the colourful history of the profession. For dental students it should be compulsory literature. It will prove that studying dentistry can also be a lot of fun (with a price set at what may be considered a student-friendly rate). And yes, while the musea and art galleries are unfortunately suffering from coronavirus restrictions, this 'book museum' is a wonderful alternative!

Ronald C. Gorter